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FROM THE LIMBO OF FORGOTTEN THINGS

A BOOK OF VERSE

BY
MARY STUART TYSON



BOSTON
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DEC 1

TO THE MEMORY OF
MY PARENTS

NOTE

The author's thanks are due to *Contemporary Verse* for permission to reprint "Eastereven" and "The Quest," which appeared in its pages, the latter in slightly altered form.

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THE MARRIAGE OF A KING

“ Philip (Augustus’) second wife was Ingeborg of Denmark, whom he married in 1193, and divorced the day after their marriage. He soon afterward married Agnes of Meran. Ingeborg appealed to the Pope, who took her cause in hand, and, on Philip’s refusing to abandon Agnes, placed the kingdom under an interdict. The services ceased in all the churches: the people were without prayers. In the end the king was obliged to yield. He sent away Agnes of Meran, who died of grief, and took Ingeborg back.” Victor Duruy, “ History of France.” Translated by Mrs. M. Carey.

NOTE. The cause of Philip’s repudiation of Ingeborg has never been known to history. For the purposes of romance I have assumed it to be his already formed attachment to Agnes.

AUTHOR.

PRELUDE

THE passion of a long dead king
Thrills through the ages down to me;
Hundreds of years ago he loved
Agnès de Méranie.

Agnès, we know not if thine eyes
Were blue or dusk as autumn wood,
Or what thy face, when vividly
Throbbled thy Tyrolean blood.

We only know thy spell was bound
About thy love; and we afar
Behold thee with his ravished eyes,
Fair as a dawn-lit star.

We know that when the great, dread curse
Pressed on his heart his people's pain,
He put thee from him, nevermore
To see thy face again.

We know the curse was lifted up,
The Church smiled and the land drew breath.
Agnès, what meant her smile to thee?
Thy wound was unto death.

THE MARRIAGE OF A KING

PART I

Merania. The courtyard of the castle of the Duke Berthold.

Morning. Soldiers walk to and fro. Knocking is heard.

FIRST SOLDIER

What summons is without?

[*Voice, without:*] Open the gate
To a poor wandering monk. I bring great news.
[*Enter a French monk on a jaded horse*]

MONK

Hé! I have ridden up and down the highways,
Bidding the people everywhere rejoice.
But send and fetch me first a stoup of wine,
My throat is dry with bawling out my tidings.
[*Wine is brought. The MONK drinks deep*]

SECOND SOLDIER

Haste and deliver, our impatience waits.

MONK

Enough amazement will I give to you.
Know then my sovereign lord, the king of
France,
Has of late taken to himself as wife
None other than the Princess Ingeborg
Of Denmark's royalty.

FIRST SOLDIER

The king of France
Wedded to Denmark's princess? Is this true?

MONK

True by the Mass! I saw it with these eyes —
The king, the queen and all the royal train,
Processions, music, and high carnival.
Straightway I hastened forth to be of those
To spread the word and see the people gape.
I am not one who loves to stay at home
Shut in the monastery, where all night
The monks bray in the church, and through the
day
They labor without ceasing, save at meals.
No, let me take the road with my good horse,
Mix with my kind for jest and gaiety.
Such disposition brought me by good chance
To witness the event I have disclosed;
And further wish to travel brings me here,
As everywhere is welcome strange far news.

The Marriage of a King 3

FIRST SOLDIER

Strange news indeed, for almost we had thought
Our princess, so well loved and beautiful,
Might be the queen to sit on France's throne.

MONK

What profit would be gotten by my king
In an alliance with Merania?
No, he soars higher. Mark the word I say,
Beneath King Philip Capet's rule our land
Will rise to be the greatest in the world,
Stretching her boundaries from sea to sea.
No city now with Paris may compare;
You have not seen her newly paven streets;
The vast cathedral rising in her midst
In honour of Our Lady; nor the wall
Now building to surround her with defence.
I drink to her, our king, and to his bride.

[*Drinks*]

And let me not forget to give you thanks;
For I and my poor jade are wearied out
With sojourning on your rough mountain ways.

FIRST SOLDIER

Well, no one here may want for food or caring;
So enter in and rest you from wayfaring.

[*Exeunt*]

The following evening. The Chamber of the PRINCESS AGNES. She is seated upright on a chair. Her ladies stand apart from her near the window, and speak to one another in undertones.

FIRST LADY

Since yestermorn she has not spoken word.

SECOND LADY

Nor touched her lute, nor yet has tasted meat.
The broidery frame stands idle by the couch;
No deed of grace or sign of gentle pity,
As she is wont to the unfortunate.
But ever has she sat as one in trance
From the dark hour that brought the messenger.

THIRD LADY

How did the night pass, you who slept with her?

FOURTH LADY

The arras murmured to the wandering gusts,
The rushes stirred and lifted on the floor
As though an unseen footfall traversed them.

Without the dogs howled, tugging at the leash.
The armour of the passing sentinels
Clanked as they walked ; there was no other
 sound.

THIRD LADY

No stifled sob? No lamentable moan?

FOURTH LADY

Nothing. So still she lay I deemed her dead.
And all the love I bear unto my lady
Was centred on the wish it might be so.
But when was ever death so merciful?
Through the long watches of the night I felt
Those fixed eyes staring into nothingness.

FIRST LADY

Our lady's pride would hold her eyes from tears.

FOURTH LADY

I think no sense of what the word might mean
Holds place within her bosom ; only pain
So deep it overwhelms all other sense.

SECOND LADY

Great wonder if it could be otherwise ;
Her love once given is forever given.
O ! Philip, king of France, what reckoning
Hast thou to meet in the last judgment's call ;

Thou and the haughty bride whom thou hast
taken,
Ingeborg, princess of the northern land,
Who owned the day that should have been our
lady's,
The night that should have brought her happiness.

FOURTH LADY

Now day and night are both the same to her.

FIRST LADY

The evening falls apace. The level sun
Burns only on the highest battlements,
Where the long shadow creeps up from the
court
It has already swallowed in its gloom. . . .
But what is this? A clamour is without;
The drawbridge falls, and the portcullis lifts;
What cortège enters through the castle gate? —
Mother of God! What standard waves below?
Confirm my sight, and prove I am not mad.

[She seizes the wrist of her nearest companion]

SECOND LADY

Christ's mercy! 'Tis the fleur-de-lis of France.

THIRD LADY

Oh, look to where our princess has arisen
As one who newly wakens from the dead.

FIRST LADY

Again the spirit gleams from out her eyes ;
The life-blood courses through its unused chan-
nels.

SECOND LADY

Below the portal swings ; and on the stair,
Hark to the ringing sound of mailèd feet.

[*The arras part, and PHILIP AUGUSTUS,
king of France, stands in the doorway.
He kneels to the princess, bowing his
forehead on her hands. The ladies re-
tire*]

PHILIP

My queen, my love, behold me body and soul
Prostrate before thee. I could not endure
Apart from thee, nor bear the galling chain
I forged myself so short a time gone by.

[*Rising to his feet*]

'Tis ended. Ingeborg I have divorced.
I put her from me the ensuing day
Of marriage, and forthwith to Compiègne
Summoned my prelates to annul the bond.
This have they done. Since then by day and
night,

With all haste have I posted furiously,
So that I might the sooner reach thy feet.
I have no words to tell why I dared come;
I only plead my utter need of thee.
And may the company before high God,
Angels, archangels, and the saints of France,
Bear witness to the oath which now I swear;
No queen shall sit beside me on my throne
Save Agnes, Princess of Merania.

AGNES

Hardly I hear the words which thou hast said,
I only hear thy voice. I only know
Thou art before me, thou in very truth;
And I who have no life apart from thee
Am standing in the presence of my lord.
*[They are clasped in one another's arms,
while their lips meet in a long silence]*

PHILIP

Weep, my beloved. I weep. Upon my breast
Let fall thy blessèd tears of happiness,
And freely cleanse thy heart from suffer-
ing. . . .
Now call for thine attendants and thy dames,
Bid them prepare thee as befits a queen,
And bring thee to the chapel in this hour,
Where I shall wait thee. In my retinue
I hither bring the Bishop of Auxerre

In readiness for consecrating rite.

There will I take thee though the earth in wonder

Beneath my feet should gape and fall asunder.

[*Exit* AGNES]

What ho, without! Bid the lord bishop enter,
The chaplain of the castle, and my nobles,

My 'squires, my attendants, and my pages.

[*Enter the* BISHOP OF AUXERRE, *the* CHAPLAIN, NOBLES, *etc.* *To* CHAPLAIN]

Sir priest, give heed to my lord bishop's words,

He knows, and shall instruct you in my will.

[*Exeunt all save the* BISHOP *and the* CHAPLAIN]

CHAPLAIN

My lord, what is it your French king would do?

I tremble when I think what this may mean.

BISHOP

E'en that he wed tonight with the maid here;

So be prepared to render me assistance

In all that may concern the ritual.

CHAPLAIN

But this is grievous sin he contemplates;

Doth he not fear the holy wrath of Rome?

BISHOP

He fears no Pope, nor saint, nor God, nor devil.
As you would guard your peace place not your-
self

In opposition to the king of France.
He goes to win the lady's father now,
Setting himself thereby an easy task.
Dost think your Duke will be rejoiced, or no,
At such an high alliance for his house?

CHAPLAIN

Dread power of kings in this our mortal day!
Nothing remains for me but to obey.

[*Excunt*]

INTERLUDE

THE candles flare from the altar
Through the incense-burdened air;
They gleam on a priest intoning,
On two who are kneeling there.

One is a king in his purple,
One is a lady fair;
Fitful, they gleam on her jewels,
Fitful, they gleam on her hair.

The ring is placed on her finger,
His hand is joined to her hand.
The company there assembled
Are shivering where they stand.

They tremble as though were passing
On the air a wandering ghost,
As they bend in adoration
Before the uplifted Host.

He leads her down from the altar,
He leads her forth from the place.
Her eyes are rapt in a vision,
His eyes never leave her face.

PART II

Rome. The Papal Court. POPE INNOCENT III is seated on his throne surrounded by his cardinals.

INNOCENT

Full three years has the insolent French king
Defied the might of Rome's authority,
Openly living with his concubine
In impious outrage to all Christendom;
The while his lawful wife appealed in vain
For reinstatement in her queenly rights.
My predecessor, the weak Celestine,
Sent but entreaties and remonstrances
That she might be restored. Let Philip now
Find in me one who is inflexible
To make him bend his head to Holy Church,
And learn her dictates are inviolable.
He will not stand against her awful curse
Wherewith I threaten him, unless he give
To my command instant obedience.
Is not my legate yet returned from France?

A CARDINAL

Your Holiness, e'en now he waits without.

INNOCENT

Bid him to enter. [*Aside*] Scarce can I retain

My patience till I hear the word he bring.

[*The cardinal LEGATE enters and kneels to INNOCENT*]

Lord Cardinal, I welcome you; but pray
Make no delay in telling what befell,
And how this king's pride grovelled in the dust.

LEGATE

Your Holiness, the mandate is delivered.
It was with difficulty that I gained
With the adulterous Philip, audience.
When to receive me he at length consented,
He listened to me with such absent mind
As showed the more insulting to your words.
But understanding in the end their purport,
Turning his gaze on me, his proud lip curled,
And answering not at all, his eyes once more
Resumed the look of one whose thoughts are far
Away from present trivial happenings.
So he dismissed me from the presence chamber.

[*INNOCENT, trembling with rage, rises with upraised arm*]

INNOCENT

Now let the interdict descend on him.
Let the whole realm of Philip lie accursed.

Not only may the place of his abode
Be desolated, but let my decree
Be published through the length and breadth
of France.

No sacrifice of the most holy Mass;
No baptism save to the newly born;
To no one may be absolution given;
Nothing — save unction in extremity.
No marriage, burial; let the doors be shut
In every church within his wide domain,
That this most blasphemous of kings may feel
Upon his neck the iron heel of Rome.
Let him be crushed beneath a people's hate,
Denied all spiritual sustenance;
His days deserted, but his fearful nights
Filled with unquiet ghosts of those who lie
In ground unhallowed. May they drive him
forth

To eat grass as the Babylonian king.
Know ye all ages, and in every land,
No power before the will of Rome can stand.

[*Exeunt*]

Paris. The palace of the king.

AGNES alone in her chamber.

AGNES

Time is too long that I have known his sorrow.
Too long I know the word of sunderance
Is mine to utter, for he will not speak.
Night must no more descend upon my silence;
I will take courage while I am alone;
Ere we shall sit together in the twilight,
And the slow veil of the enshrouding dark
Fall and enfold us in its still embrace.
Then should I fail as I have failed before . . .
When after he has left me each grey morn,
My will is strong to turn itself to speech
And hear at last the answer from his lips.
Yet even so, I mind me 'twas of late
I sat among the barons of the court
In the assembly of the council hall;
And I know not with what solicitude
My look was fastened on his countenance,
That, set in stern lines of accustomed pain
Made my determination gather force.
Sudden he turned his eyes to rest on mine,
And their dark trouble softened with such grace
As though an eagle had become a dove.
Then could I not for rapture stay my blush,

Nor check the flow of my quick-welling tears.
And all resolve was drowned and swept
away. . . .

No more of that . . .

To reach the dreaded end?

Each one of us a separate way to take?

Oh, might I bear the agony alone,

And he be spared! But so it cannot be. . . .

He comes to me, his step is on the stair.

Within my soul I hold his every kiss;

Within my body hold his little child,

His life, so lately and so wondrously

Stirring in me as stirs the quickening spring.

Holy Saint Agnes, lady of the lamb,

Sustain me, strengthen me in my ordeal.

[*Enter PHILIP*]

Dearest my lord, I fain would speak with thee.

I, seeing trouble written on thy brow,

Cannot contain the ache within my breast.

It is my need to know thy trouble's cause.

PHILIP

Come to the window, where the lingering day

May from thy beauty borrow radiance.

Sit here by the embrasure in the light;

Let me sit near thee, lowly at thy feet,

Lift thy long unbound tresses to my lips,

Thus — thus — as ever. Only at thy side

May Philip find a peace for his vexed mind.

Thy presence breathes o'er me thine alpenrose,

Pale pasque flower, and gold anemone,
Pansies in iridescent purple bloom
Fringing the lip of thine eternal snows;
Saint Bruno's lily, and blue columbine
Dashed with the foam of icy cataracts.
Thy gentle power calms my turbulence. . . .
Thou knowest the strength of my long-nurtured
 wish,
Unity for the whole fair land of France,
And her extension. Now on every hand
With John of England have I compromised;
Binding my son in marriage with his niece,
Giving him Arthur's homage for the fiefs
That will be thus dismembered from my realm.
Heavily on me weigh my cares of state.

AGNES

Nay, it is more. For ever is thy wont
To meet such crises with a kindling glance
And arm thyself for conflict. By the Rood
I conjure thee, and by thy saints of France,
Withhold not from me utterance of thy grief,
Although my heart should break in listening.

PHILIP

Woe unto me if I should answer thee!
Woe unto me if I should hold my peace!
My people pine, beloved; the dead pass by
Unsanctified to burial. No sound
Of marriage bells is heard, no more the Host

Is raised on the high altars ; so to each
Is now denied the blessed Sacrament.
And all because my kiss lies on thy lips ;
Because we sit with intertwined arms ;
With eyes that read fulfilment of our dreams
In one another's gazing steadfastly.
Yet O my love, the vision fades and breaks ;
And racked, I turn to bury my face deep
In thy warm hair, and with thy soft hands press
All sight from out my eyes, sound from my ears.
Yet even thus, I see my people come
To the blank, desolate, and silent church.
Through my hands' pressure on thy covering
 hands
I hear their wail.

AGNES

My king, my love, my lord,
There is no other way but I must go. . . .
Nay, strain me not so fiercely to thy breast ;
See, Agnes kneels to thee, their king and hers,
And prays that thus be raised the interdict,
For thee to suffer Agnes to depart.

PHILIP

I cannot let thee. I will go with thee,
Leaving my barren throne. But to remain,
Knowing thy lonely anguish far away —
Lifting my life up like an empty cup
The wine has spilled from? Rather might I die.

AGNES

The kings of this world have a trust to keep,
The King of Heaven, their Exemplar, giveth.
And it is for thy people that I plead;
They look to thee, their sovereign and their
father.

Who but thyself knows to redress their wrongs,
Soothe their poor grievances, defend their land
Against encroachment of the foreign foe,
Create for them wiser and better laws,
And give the blessing of internal peace?
Like lost sheep of my wild Tyrolean hills,
They will lie perished in the driving snow
Without thy guiding hand to succour them.

PHILIP

Thou wringest my soul. I can no more with-
stand,
But must fall vanquished in the unequal fight
I wage against the mighty power of Rome.
There is no other way of life but this —
The way of death in life for thee and me.

AGNES

Thy kingly word? Ah! God, the path lies
plain. . . .
Yet once more, O belovèd, and once more
Thy kiss — my bosom to thy bosom claspt —
One only time again, for 'tis the last.

EPILOGUE

The Castle of Poissy.

The PRINCESS AGNES lies dying. Her ladies kneel about her couch. She speaks to them.

Loïs and Constance, Alice, Eulalie,
You whose true love has been without alloy,
No less in this sad end of time for me,
Than when you followed me in my great joy;

You know that I have tried to hold my life
From slipping in its misery away;
You know I can no more maintain the strife,
And must accept defeat as best I may.

Perchance Our Lady, of the piercèd heart,
Will deign to have compassion upon me,
Who cannot look to her ere I depart,
But drop my eyelids in humility.

In mercy has she gathered to her breast
My little son, his father never saw.
Meekly I render thanks. And for the rest,
Her pity may transcend the human law.

You know that never could I stay my thought
On what the learnèd doctors fain would say;
And that their reasoning but went for naught
When clear before me my heart's counsel lay.

They have condemned my sin beyond reprieve,
For that I cannot tell them I repent.
To silence their insistence should I weave
A lie in answer to their argument?

But ah! the guilt they pass so lightly by
Still in my last hour overshadows me;
It was through me rose up the people's cry,
Whose heads were bowed beneath the Pope's
decree.

For to their faith the Church's sealèd door
Denied them their salvation's hope to win.
I sinned in causing pain, but sorrow more
For making likewise my beloved to sin.

Forgive my failure to abide with you;
Gather yet closer, you I love so well;
Let no priest come for penitence to sue,
Nor let them toll for me the passing bell.

Before my dying eyes no means of grace;
No crucifix on dying lips of mine;
This ring, his pledge of love, has claimed their
place —
So on my last thought may his image shine.
Amen.

ON THE STAIRWAY AT BLOIS
A TRAGIC DIALOGUE

Qui veut oïr chanson?
C'est du grand Duc de Guise,
Et bon, bon, bon, bon,
Di, dan, di dan don
C'est du grand Duc de Guise.

ANON.

TO
ALICE W.

ALICE, this passion of the past,
Dead more than thrice a hundred years,
Whither, with all its joys and fears
Does it lead, after all, at last?

But through the centuries of wars,
The centuries of moral strife,
Such force maintains its primal life
Unchanging, constant as the stars.

Bear gently with me, as is meet.
It may be this has little worth;
But you were present at its birth
And so I lay it at your feet.

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE

HENRI DE LORRAINE, Duc de Guise, called *Lé Balafré* from the scar on his face won on the field of Dormans.

CHICOT, jester to Henry III of Valois, King of France.

CHARLOTTE DE BEAUNE SEMBLANÇAY, Marquise de Noirmoutier, Mistress of the Duc de Guise.

A MESSENGER.

There are heard also the voices of the SIEUR DE MARILLAC, a courtier; the SIEUR DE RÉVOL, Secretary of State; and the CARDINAL DE GUISE, speaking from within the castle.

The action takes place in the château of Blois on the morning of the twenty-third of December, 1588.

ON THE STAIRWAY AT BLOIS

The interior whorl of the open stairway of Francis I in the château. Half way up the stair to the left may be seen the door leading into the Council Chamber of Henry III. CHICOT the jester is crouched in an embrasure of one of the windows. The early morning sky is lowering, and the light that falls on the elemental beauty of the carved stone is sombre and sad. CHICOT is watching the pages as they play at cup and ball below in the Courtyard. Throughout the following he remains unobserved to the other persons speaking.

CHICOT

Bravo! Bravo! That was well caught, I swear!

But presently will be one better caught!

Rare sport these games of ball, now here — now there —

And when the victor's guerdon is a crown!

Hien! But the game plays out. Come up, brave ball;

With all the many pairs of hands outstretched
'Tis over likely thou wilt not be missed.

28 On the Stairway at Blois

Come, flaunt thy title of Le Balafré,
And find within the means to glut thy pride.
Yet doubt not that the scar marring thy cheek,
Vain as thou art of it, was easier
To heal than others thou shalt soon receive.
For through the lengths of all the royal rooms,
And up and down the secret inner stair
Huddle my lord d'Epernon's trusty guard,
Each one well armed with tried and tempered
steel,

Much fitter than would be the blade I bear
To drink of blood so high and menacing.

[*He ruefully examines an old sword blade
which he carries; but quickly brighten-
ing, continues*]

The Mass is sung. God's blessing now is sure
Upon the issue of the enterprise.

Why tarry longer, Duke? Would that my lord
The King had trusted this same work to me —
Aha! It would be short.

[*He thrusts in the air with the blade as
if stabbing an invisible enemy. As he
does so a step is heard entering the
stairway from the Court*]

Hist!

[*He whets the blade against the window*]

Hé! J'ay Guise.

[*He crouches out of sight. As the step
advances, HENRI DUC DE GUISE is seen*

ascending, rounding the curve of the central pillar, on his way to keep his appointment with the king. His eyes are as the eyes of a man seeing nothing of the world outside, but fixed as in contemplation of an inner vision. He pauses, his gaze upon the vision seeming to deepen, and murmurs involuntarily]

GUISE

Her eyes! — her lips! —

[Again footsteps are heard on the lower stair. They mount hurriedly, and a messenger enters. He hands the duke a handkerchief from which a paper drops, and as quickly goes down and disappears. GUISE picks up the paper, reads it, crumples it in his hand and lets it fall, saying shortly]

The ninth.

[His eyes regain the vision]

Her eyes! — her lips! —

Her soft hair at the pressure of my hand
Yielding to curl its golden tendrils round
My fingers, as her gentle spirit twines
Itself about my inmost being's core.

[His look strays to the sky seen through the window]

30 On the Stairway at Blois

How strange the morn, how alien to the night!
The morn with sombre clouds veiling the sun,
The night all luminous with her bright hair,
Its gold creating consciousness of light
Throughout the darkness that encircled us.
The morn whose cheek is cold and stained with
tears,

The night all warm and dewy sweet with her.

[Another and softer step sounds from below. Faltering yet resolute it ascends, and as it comes nearer CHARLOTTE, Marquise de Noirmoutier is seen approaching the duke where he has paused on the stairway. Her arms are half extended. Her face has a deadly pallor, while the lips quiver. The conflict between love, fear of the duke's anger, terror for his safety and determination in her purpose is evident in her mien. He turns and looks at her. His face becomes rigid and stern. Her gaze meets his unswervingly]

I have forbidden that thou come to me
Ere I should visit thee again. And now
What I commanded thou dost disregard.

CHARLOTTE

Suffer me now to speak, for so I must.
A power stronger even than thy will,

Which until now has swayed me flesh and soul,
Holds me in domination. Yesternight
A horror of great darkness came o'er me;
Such fear as I had never felt before
Though knowing well that danger compassed
thee. . . .

It was as if Death crept into my bed,
Death wearing thy similitude. I lay
With all my heart's blood frozen at its source,
Unable to cry out. . . .

And this was ere
The moon had set upon our trance of love,
And while the rapture of thy long last kiss
Still laved me in its flood when thou wert gone.

[Her voice breaks in a sob]

Thou knowest I have prayed thee heretofore
To fly, or be the first to strike the blow.
But more to fly this murder-ridden court
Inimical to thee, where in the dark
Of every corner of the castle walls
May lurk assassins hungry for thy life
By day no less than night. And thou hast shut
My mouth with kisses till my senses swooned.
This may no longer be.

Though I have known
Of the repeated warnings come to thee,

*[He starts, frowning, but makes a gesture
of contempt]*

Ever my fears have all been soothed away.

32 On the Stairway at Blois

They cannot be since the stark terror seized
Upon my soul and would not be gainsaid.
And since the dawning of this winter day
Again from unknown sources thou art warned —

[*Catching sight of the fallen paper*]

Another message lies there at thy feet!

GUISE

It doth amaze me that the sport of fools
Should hold so high a place in thy esteem.
But more than this, that thou should'st entertain

The very shadow of a thought that I
Who am Lieutenant General of France —
Her king that is to be — should pay regard
To such weak babble of ingenious lies.
Dost thou recall the time of Barricades
When Paris woke to her true loyalty,
Hailing me for the conqueror who drove
The Germans from our land? How thereupon
The multitude would have beset the Louvre
To crush the viper brood of Italy
In person of its ineffectual head,
But that my clemency withheld its hand?
In the streets thronging with my followers
What but my presence, and without my sword,
Had saved the hireling Swiss from massacre?
What followed? From the city, stealthily,
Thou knowest that the wretched Valois fled,

Too cowardly to show his face to me
And to a people righteous in revolt.
The while his mother to ensure his flight
Made pretence to consider my demands.
Thereafter all I had required of him
Has *graciously* been granted. Dost thou think
He dare defy me having tried my strength?

CHARLOTTE

Here all is otherwise. Paris is far,
The Valois' followers many, and the town
Notorious in hostility to thee
And to the cause in thee personified.
The king, unworthy of the clemency
Shown unto him, would be incapable
Of acting likewise.

GUISE

I was not aware
I spoke to thee of clemency from him.

[*The coldness of his look pierces her. Despairingly she covers her face with her hands while the tears trickle between her fingers. GUISE speaks with more kindness*]

Touching the messages which thou art pleased
To call by name of warnings, I had thought
They had been hid from thee.

CHARLOTTE

Thou canst not hide
Thy peril, howsoever shadowed forth,
From knowledge of the woman loving thee
And kneeling in entreaty at thy feet.

*[She kneels before him, clasping her hands.
He raises her, catching her to his breast.
She throws her arms about his neck with
a half uttered cry. He holds her closer,
kissing her lips. A long pause]*

O Henri, O my love! Oh, captive me,
Weak in the fortress of thine arms! But no,
This weakness only strengthens the resolve
Of love so strong that it can brave thine ire
And in the throne room of the citadel,
Let come what may, defy its lord's command.

GUISE

Sweet, my most sweet, dearer than life to me,
Dearer to me for all thy fears for me,
These fears are but the phantasm of the night
The full day shatters. Nothing bodes me ill.
The Holy League is strong, the paltry king
Is weaker than the worm beneath my heel.
The Béarnais? what should I dread from him,
An heretic whom God condemns unheard?
And when the nation in security
Shall find in me its high demands fulfilled,
No vision of the half awakened brain

Shall sooner be forgot than all thy fears.
Thou shalt be as the queen — the only one —
And never queen of France more loved than
thou ;

Not Agnès de Méranie, not Queen Berthe
Nor she whom once they called La belle des
Belles.

Dost thou remember how we grieved for her,
By her pale image with its sculptured lambs?
Too early death had severed her from love.
And we have sorrowed for those two sad queens
Living in cruel exile from their lords,
For life apart is sadder far than death.
Yet we exulted in our sorrowing
To know their passions' fulness, till at length
We lost the sense of theirs within our own.

CHARLOTTE

Thy words fall on my ears with hollow sound
Of clods upon the coffin in a grave,
And I am conscious of no other thing
Than of thy living presence here and now.
This much I know, the present instant's sure,
It may be snatched from all-devouring doom.
Now — go back now — and cross the court and
drop

Over the ramparts to the river's strand ;
There stalwart hands will bear thee swiftly on
Within the boat that leads thee to thy friends.

One moment more and it may be too late,
Ere the curved horror of this fateful stair
Engulf thee as the maelstrom of the sea,
Wherein 'twere safer thou shouldst hurl thyself
Than pass beyond the threshold of that door.

GUISE

[*With returning sternness, disengaging
her arms.*]

Charlotte, affairs concerning my estate
Are brought to such a pass, that if mine eyes
Beheld Death enter at the window there
I would not by the open door escape.

[*CHARLOTTE'S arms fall to her sides. She
stands with unseeing eyes. GUISE with
a long gaze at her full of the intensity
of his passion, suddenly turns, and with-
out looking back goes up the stair and
in at the door of the Council Chamber
which shuts behind him with a clang.
At the sound CHARLOTTE starts and
rushes up the steps to the door, flinging
her arms upward against the iron-bound
wood and pressing her face upon it.
She utters a low moan. CHICOT has
crept from his hiding place, following
and peering at her with curiosity. Ar-
rested by her moan he pauses.*

From within CHARLOTTE can hear her lover

as he speaks in jesting tones with the courtiers, and presently she is able to distinguish the words that are said]

The voice of the SIEUR DE MARILLAC.

My lord, your face is pale.

The voice of GUISE

It is with cause.

I yet am cold from having been exposed
So early to the bleakness of the morn.
The fire dies down. Ho, lackey, bring more
wood,

And fetch my silver shell with sweets therein
From some of my retainers whom you find. . . .
Though, being long to wait for his return,
Monsieur de Morfontaine, be good enough
To have word sent to the king's gentleman,
Requesting that he shortly hither bring
Some damsons or some trifle of the king's.
. . . Ah, that is well. . . . My lords here in
my box

Are plums conservèd with meticulous skill,
I find they rightly suit my appetite,
Honour me in enjoying them with me.

[An inner door is heard to open, and there is borne to CHARLOTTE'S ears the voice of the SIEUR DE RÉVOL, Secretary of State, who has entered the Council

*Chamber from the private apartments
of the king]*

The voice of the SIEUR DE RÉVOL

His Majesty is pleased to wait the Duke
In the Old Cabinet.

The voice of GUISE

Indeed? 'Tis well.

My spirit ever in obedience
Bows to my liege lord's bidding. Sirs, adieu.
I leave these plums for whoso wishes them.

*[There is a noise as of the silver box hav-
ing been tossed upon the table. Im-
mediately afterward the footsteps and
the closing of a door tell that GUISE
has entered the king's private chambers.
The silence is tense and unbroken.
CHARLOTTE has never relaxed her atti-
tude, her body pressed closely against
the door]*

.
*[A sound comes from the far inner rooms,
— a muffled voice — a loud and dread-
ful cry; then tumult and confused mur-
muring. CHARLOTTE regardless of all
else is tearing at the fastening of the
door. It has been barred from within.
She beats against it with her head and
hands]*

The voice of the CARDINAL DE GUISE

[*Loud and instinct with horror and alarm.*]

They are murdering my brother!

CHARLOTTE

O my God!

[*She continues to beat upon the door. Her forehead and hands are bleeding and the woodwork is stained with her blood. The cries and clamour within have increased, and they draw nearer bearing with their sound another, as of staggering and trampling feet. Then there is a heavy fall.*

On the instant all is still. The castle seems to hold its breath. CHARLOTTE with a last cry falls backward down the steps. CHICOT, who has watched her with the fascination of terror, is seized with a violent trembling, and, gibbering, stares at her as she lies with bloodstained face and palms upturned to the beautiful insensate traceries of stone]

L'ENVOI

ALICE, I give you this my verse.
If you, as I, have humbly sought,
You find a philosophic thought
Mid passion's rapture and its curse.

Yet — if we ask of those who slake
Their thirsting at these springs of fire,
They say, One hour's fulfilled desire
Is worth the heart's eternal break.

And so I leave it as it stands;
Leaving as well the high emprise
To tell of ways more nobly wise
To other minds and other hands.

NOTE

In the foregoing the historical data of Michelet have mainly been followed with the exception of the actual meeting of Guise and Mme. de Noirmoutier on the stairway, which is of course an invention. Mézeray is responsible for the presence there of Chicot, and for his pun, as Guise passed that way to the Council Chamber.

We have attempted to throw around the passion of these lovers more glamour than would seem warrantable, when we remember that they were products of the Court of Catherine de Médicis, not to speak of their many other and former love intrigues; yet in approaching the figures of the past we venture to feel that liberty may be taken; for we walk with Gautier

. . . among the ruins of a buried world,
In the mystery of shadows
Amid the limbo of forgotten things.

OTHER POEMS

OF MY VERSE CHILDREN

My little bed within my little room,
Quiet and white and shrouded in soft gloom,
Your narrow length has held me in delight
Of sweet austere conception in the night.

You have upheld me in the pangs of birth,
In travail not as travail of the earth.
On you I bore the children of my brain
With joyous transport unalloyed by pain.

Children of fantasy, whose merit lies
Mayhap but solely in their parent's eyes,
I would not give such travail brought to me
For earthly parenthood's reality.

EASTER EVEN

A ROBIN sang

As the late twilight melted into night:

No leaves, no flowers yet

In the young April where his feet are set,

But sure foreknowledge fills him with delight.

The memory of a thorn-crowned head,

Whose blood but yesterday his breast ensan-
guinèd,

Leaves nor regret nor sorrow;

His heart is filled with joy of the tomorrow.

Would God, O Bird,

That all men might be stirred

With understanding of the song I heard!

THE QUEST

TO C. T. D.

WHEN shall we look for the birds that are
 winging,
Where shall we seek for that joyous throng?
When the leaves are fresh and the flowers are
 springing,
Where the heart of the woods is wild with song.

All May long by the wings that hover,
The notes that quiver, the breast that gleams,
We are guided in quest of the woodland lover
In haunted country by haunted streams.

Find him or lose him on hill or in hollow,
In arching branches or brambled trails,
The wild life calls and we still must follow
Though hot noon passes and sunlight pales.

SOMEWHERE IN FLANDERS

ON the sodden ground
Stirs a living form,
Among the dead forms
There on the ground.

Victory
 — and defeat
Have rolled by.
 Beyond,
His friends have taken
 the enemy's trench.
In his heart
Lust of battle,
Burning thirst to avenge
 his country's wrongs
Have gone.
Only is left the longing
Insatiable
For his soul's peace.

Out of the mist
A figure in khaki
Moves towards him.

Now he is here. . . .
Ah! that face so kind,
So full of holiness —
Could but proclaim
A priest of Christ.

The form on the ground
Stirs again;
With his failing voice
He utters a cry —
“ Father,
Show me the Cross.”

The man in khaki
Looks sadly down.
Alas!
He has no cross —
Nothing to satisfy
 that last appeal,
To close in peace
Those dying imploring eyes.

Pitifully
He stoops to the ground
And binds together
Two fragments of wood,
Torn and blackened
By the shrapnel.

OFF THE COAST

THE soft hot winds rejoice,
The sun streams over me,
And in my ears is the voice
Of my old friend the sea.

The wild birds cry above,
The waters lap below,
And in my heart is the love
That only pain may know.

RETURN OUT OF ESTRANGEMENT

PENLLYN

BACK to the place of my wild fresh childhood,
Wild fresh meadows, and woods green and
deep —

O my country, take me to your keeping,
Take me and fold me and let me sleep.

Give me the wind in the leaves of the corn fields,
Shedding their fragrance through the day and
night,

Where the earth dips to the lip of the wood-
land,

Steeped in the radiance of the August light.

Steeped in the light that draws the tasselled
tresses upward,

Signal of the ripening of the golden breasts.

Under the stars, though no wind seems stirring
Still is heard the restfulness of their unrest.

O'er the rounded summits of the full-leaved trees
of summer

Looms the distant thunder head against the
sky,

Sky intensely blue above the quivering heat haze
Rising from the mown fields of wheat and oats
and rye.

Ripening apples dropping on the sward of the
orchard

Close cut, and green as when the year was
young;

Yellowing pears and reddening apples dropping
From the overburdened boughs where late they
hung.

O my country, your long meadow marshland,
Where the cows graze, where the grasshoppers
play,

Here the mists of evening draw from out your
keeping

Strange sweet scents unknown to the day.

Fold me awhile from the sense of human sorrow,
War of world's words, and dread anxiety;
Even earth's beauty seems elsewhere half alien,
Here alone I find reality.

ON AN ANCIENT STONE CIRCLE

IN THE MULL HILLS. I. O. M.

STONES, what your mystic purport none can
say.

Here through the centuries man makes or mars
You stand. The empty moor is yours by
day —

By night the silent pageant of the stars.

FORGETFULNESS

God gave this gift to man. Of all that He
Has ever given this is of the best,
For by it we are freed from the unrest
And ceaseless anguish born of memory.
The lotos flower around us blooms though we
Of roses of our youth be dispossessed.
It is forgetfulness that calms the breast
And silences the past's wild reveille.
Old voices sound no longer in our ears,
And of the clasp of hands we used to know
We dream no more with passionate regret.
Over it all is drawn the veil of years;
And though we loved and suffered long ago,
Peace is about us now — for we forget.

SUFFICIENCY

My eyes looked into his eyes,
And there was written the love of old
Buried by many a winter's snow
And lying beneath the mold.
Like a drift of blossoms across my face
Came the lost spring back from its silent
place. . . .

SCAMANDER

(The *National Geographic Magazine* tells how the Scamander is decreasing in volume, and may soon become altogether dry.)

THE river has wearied, wearied,
In his ceaseless fall and flow
Since the Argive host embattled
On his plain laid Ilion low.
As the higher gods forsaking
The fane of their own making,
So the god of the stream is taking
His leave though loth to go.

The sand that clogs his current
And breaks his strengthless wave
He dreams are the warrior corpses
His glory was to lave;
And the dry reeds rattle,
The clash of spears in battle,
When the careless feet of cattle
Stamp on their ancient grave.

From his cold springs of Ida
He leaps to meet the foe,
Only to wander, aimless,
On the blank plain below.
Till his final waves have wended
To the sea and with her blended,
And his long dream ended
In her he rests from woe.

LEAVES

THE year is dying again.
The leaves lie over the garden path
Sodden and dank with the rain.
The wind that slew them in wrath
Now their pallid ruin despises. . . .
And the wind of memory rises
With an impulse mad and vain,
Only to drive against my heart
The sodden leaves of pain. . . .

AUTUMN ROSES

"Sweetest of roses is an Autumn rose."

FRANÇOIS VILLON.

AUTUMN, you bring me today
Not the pain of the past,
Only the present glory;
Wind in the yellowing leaves,
Meadows sunlight-steeped,
Low-hung mists on the stream;
And from far on the air,
Thrillingly, piercingly sweet,
The unseen meadow-lark's song;
And sweeter than roses of June,
These blooming late in the year
Loved and immortalized by
The long dead poet of France.

Still, O Roses, you lift
Your open hearts to the sun;
Not the before nor beyond
Can your serenity touch
In the perfection of now.
Only to lift up your leaves
Into the warmth and the light,
Only to be what you are —
Roses — this is enough!

TO MADONNA BEATRICE D'ESTE

PRINCESS, an enviable lot is thine!
Fate summons death to take thee from mis-
 chance,
Lest gathering gloom make thy bright spirit
 pine,
Or sorrow cause thy feet to flag i' the dance.

ABSENCE

FROM afar your thoughts were turning
Unto me, I was aware;
Till it seemed by your deep yearning
You had almost drawn me there.

And it seemed I hastened to you,
And I stood beside your bed,
Called you by your name and clasped you,
'To my bosom held your head.

RAIN SONG FOR A CHILD

LITTLE raindrops, falling raindrops,
Dripping fast and dripping slow,
 From where come ye,
 Whither go ye,
With your voices soft and low?

From the sky we seek the flowers
That lie buried out of sight,
 And we find them,
 And we wake them,
And we lead them to the light.

MME. ANNA PAVLOWA

SHE is the mist that hovers above the cataract,
The light that glimmers dimly on the lone marsh
tract;
She is the spirit of the earth, the lily upward
growing,
The sea foam, and the wild wind and the thistle
down 'tis blowing.

M —

I KNOW how meek her face must be
With silent lips and close shut eyes;
I know — though I may only see
Where the white heap of lilies lies.

The time she lingered here with us
The grosser human elements
Could not her gentle spirit touch,
Clothed in its high habiliments.

Pain, Death and Love were hers; and she
Now understands the nothingness
Of two — of one the victory;
And so the knowledge stays with me
Of how meek her sweet face must be.

THE NAME OF PETRARCH'S LADY

WHAT melodies his spirit must have heard,
What cadences within its sound have caught;
The scent of all the flowers of the world
Must have o'erwhelmed him merely at its
thought.

TO SIR J. FORBES-ROBERTSON

HIS FAREWELL IN HAMLET

WHEN you have hence departed o'er the sea,
Take with you knowledge of the memory —
Nor time nor waste of waters can efface —
You leave behind you as in legacy.

Our eyes beheld the eternal love and hate
Once more; the soul 'twixt hell and heaven's
gate.

You wrought for us the miracle anew,
And all our thanks are still inadequate.

You go. We count our loss, but by our gain:
Hamlet has lived for us in you. Our pain
To bear the knowing that forevermore
We shall not look upon his like again.

A SONG OF AUTUMN

(From the French of Paul Verlaine.)

THE long drawn sobs,
Like violin throbs,
Of Autumn's pain,
Wound my breast
With weariest
Refrain.

Pale, when around
Me falls the sound —
A knell deep —
Rises in me
Old Memory,
And I weep.

And without goal
Is borne my soul
On blasts unkind,
Hither and yon,
A dead leaf blown
By the wind.

THE GRAVE AND THE ROSE

(From the French of Victor Hugo.)

To the rose said the sombre grave,
"With those dewes that the morn to thee gave
What doest thou, lovely flower?"
To the grave said the flower then,
"What doest thou with those men
Who fall in thy chasm, dread power?"

Said the rose, "Dark grave, I have made
With the dewes of the morn, in the shade,
A perfume ambrosial and sweet."
Said the grave, "O plaintive flower,
I make with each soul in my power
An angel for Heaven meet."

L'ENVOI

TO H. B. T.

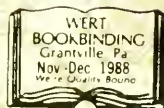
My father, if perchance you may have pined
Because of all you could not give to me,
Would you might know that you have left
 behind
 A priceless legacy.

You showed me an ideal high and pure,
You stirred my young sense of infinity,
And gave to me to hold forever sure
 The love of poetry.

With noble language of man's noblest thought
You set my springs of childish fancy free.
Still was my youth with its inspiring fraught,
 And my maturity.

My gratitude for always lies so deep
Its utterance must needs come falteringly.
Your gift to me I have and hold and keep,
 The love of poetry.





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